

75-1320/H  
19 June 75

MEMORANDUM FOR: Associate Deputy Director for Administration

SUBJECT : Secretarial Opportunities

REFERENCE : Your memo to D/Pers, dtd 29 May 75, same subject

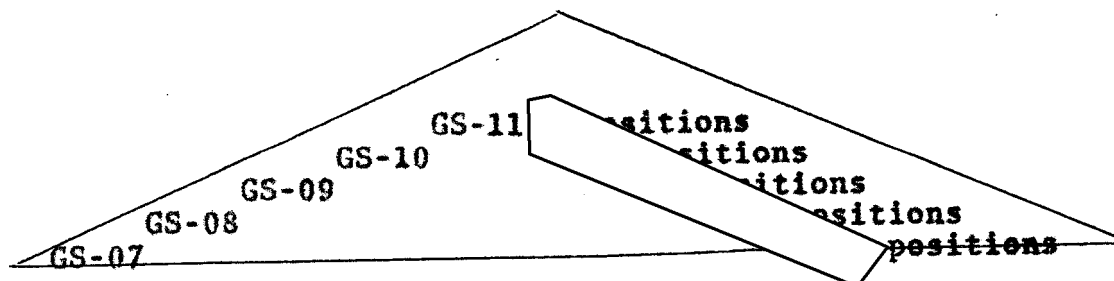
1. In your 29 May memorandum you asked for my assessment of the possibility that a large segment of our secretaries anticipate or hope for upgrading of secretarial positions. In fairness to your question, I believe I should expand on the scope of the subject and, therefore, necessarily enlarge my answer.

2. First of all, as you can well understand, the Office of Personnel has been dealing with the subject of secretarial careers in a variety of ways for many years. We have conducted exit interviews, follow-up interviews, reassignment counselling interviews, administered vacancy notices, and for about a five-year period, administered what was known as the Senior Secretarial Rostor. As a consequence of these activities we have probably seen just about every shape and form of clerical satisfaction or dissatisfaction there is.

3. I would support the opinion that a segment of the secretarial population hopes for upgrading of secretarial positions, but this is only one of the aspirations expressed by our secretarial work force. Another strong need is for recognition. In the minds of some secretaries one way of achieving recognition is through grade increases. Notice that I did not say dollar increases. These are two separate factors in the minds of secretaries. Money is quite often not the paramount need. Another need of our secretarial work force is for job satisfaction, which means fully utilizing all of their skills and being accepted and allowed to participate as a full member of the work force. Just this past week a secretary from a component came into one of our

offices to ask about vacancy notices. She had inquired about vacancy notices in her own office and had been advised that she did not need to see them -- they were reviewed by someone else and if that someone else thought that the vacancy notice was relevant to the secretary she might or might not hear about it. The same secretary had inquired in her office about training and had been advised that she didn't need any. Although this is not typical of the way in which our supervisors respond to secretaries, it still does happen in this Agency and every time it happens it sets back our efforts to improve personnel management. My point is that every supervisor has a responsibility to utilize, develop and expand the skills of his secretarial work force.

4. Below is a graph which outlines the headroom problem for secretaries in this Agency.



STAT

As you can see, the pyramid is very wide at the GS-07 level, but narrows down to a peak very quickly. It is not likely that we can or will increase the number of GS-09 and above positions and thereby increase the number of opportunities available for the GS-07 secretary. Further compounding the problem of advancement for the secretary is the fact that attrition among secretaries at the GS-09 and above level is almost nonexistent.

4. I do not believe that it would be productive or useful to give these kinds of hard facts of life to the new secretary at or near her entrance on duty. We employ secretaries at the GS-04 and GS-05 level. Those secretaries have a fair and reasonable opportunity in a three or four-year period to progress to the GS-07 level. This is the first plateau for the secretary. If she survives and stays long enough at that plateau she can move to the GS-08 level, another plateau. Over a period of years with exceptional skills and ability and some luck, she might get to be one of the few GS-10 or GS-11 secretaries in the Agency.

5. The career ladder in the secretarial field is more limited than are career ladders in professional fields -- positions are fewer and grades are lower. For the secretary who chooses to remain in the secretarial field there is no doubt that her grade level and salary level will be lower than that of employees in other career fields. Nevertheless, there are opportunities for secretaries to move into other fields. The DDO has a program through which employees can move out of the secretarial field into reports officer, analyst, and to a lesser extent, case officer positions. The DDI has research assistants, document analysts, editors and linguists, all of which represent opportunities for progression for qualified secretaries. Career panels for clerical employees are in being and multiplying throughout the Agency. For example, the DDO is presently establishing an advisory group made up of clerical employees, GS-09 and below who will examine clerical rotation, training and development problems and make recommendations to DDO career panels. The fact that more attention is being given to this subject causes me to be optimistic about improvement in opportunities for secretarial personnel and the ways in which we employ secretarial personnel.

6. The scope and complexity of this subject of opportunities for secretaries is such that there is no single solution. Improvement depends upon our education of Agency supervisory personnel, creation of more bridge jobs between secretarial and professional jobs, and, whenever and wherever possible, eliminating bias on the part of managers who think that a person who is once a secretary must always be a secretary.

F. W. M. Janney  
Director of Personnel

Distribution:

Orig & 1 - Addressee  
1 - DDA  
1 - D/Pers  
2 - DD/Pers/R&P

DD/Pers/R&P  (19 Jun 75)